

her cats to stop looking. Under the peony bushes the earth eats away the perfect set of fingerprints from the knife blade handle.

There is only one obvious and telling clue, which only you and I have seen. In his death throes, the victim wrote one initial in his own blood across his naked stomach, identifying the murderer who in flight also saw the telling initial. But the pumping blood concealed that graphic indictment before anyone else could see it. But the murderer knows that you and I have seen that scarlet clue.

-- Michael Laurence

Los Angeles CA

THE PET HITMAN

he used to do it for free,
swerve to run down the barking basset,
pick off a too perky poodle.

then he said, "why not?
romance, intrigue, money are where you find it.
time to turn professional."

the first job was a mercy killing:
two deformed kittens a widow
could not flush down her disposal.

he didn't have to advertise.
word spread around suburbia like middle-aged hips.
pet-haters came out of the closet by the litter.

comforted by his clandestine clientele,
he worked kennel to corner.
dachshunds disappeared; beagles barked no more.
schnauzers snoozed into Eleysium.

his one firm rule: no hard contracts.
James Coburn was his idol.

now he's retired in pompano beach.
his three sons with masters' degrees
in animal husbandry from harvard
run the syndicate,
with no listing in the yellow pages.